

joint training

to save lives

By TSgt Sandy McGee, 146th Airlift Wing

Two California Air National Guard units recently joined together to perform a first-time training mission to better prepare both squadrons for peacetime and wartime patient movement.

The 163rd Air Refueling Wing (ARW), located at March Air Reserve Base, and the 146th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AES), at Channel Islands Air National Guard Station, worked together to move

simulated patients on one of the 163rd's KC-135s.

The training started the day before the actual mission when the aircraft arrived at Channel Islands. The boom operators and a cadre of AES aircrew completed a "walk around" which included opening and closing of emergency exits, and familiarization with the number and locations of fire extinguishers. Especially important to the 146th AES were the alarm

Captain Miguel Jimenez of the 146th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron evaluates a "patient" in-flight.



PHOTOS BY SMSGT BRUCE GARCIA

signals which differ from those in the tactical C-130 (horns vs. bells). It is critical to know the alarm signals for the safety of patients and crew members, in the event of a real emergency.

While deployed to Southwest Asia on their rotations, the 146th AES crews often moved patients on “opportunistic aircraft.” One 146th AES flight crew actually moved patients on the KC-135 while deployed and stated that “Opportunistic Aircraft training is vital to performing the Aeromedical Evacuation mission.”

Working with the 146th AES was a huge learning experience for members of the 163rd. Two important factors learned were the number of patients that could be brought on board the aircraft and patient placement. There are certain areas of the aircraft that floor loaded litters cannot be placed, such as in front of emergency exits and on top of hydraulic areas. Additionally, only certain types of patients can be brought on board when the aircraft is used as an “opportunistic” aircraft. Two

other important factors in mission planning included determining which patients require oxygen and the correct placement of the Portable Liquid Oxygen container.

Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron personnel also learned about the advantages of flying on the KC-135 which included quicker flight time and quieter environment. This particular training mission had three litter “patients” and six ambulatory “patients.” The morning of the departure, the 146th Aerial Port Squadron helped with the mission by loading 500 pounds of equipment.

The 146th AES crew, consisting of two flight nurses and three Aeromedical Evacuation Technicians began the in-flight patient care by checking vital signs and performing “patient” assessments. The 146th crew also participated in simulated in-flight medical and aircraft emergencies. The 163rd Air Refueling Wing’s crew helped facilitate the realistic scenario-based training using the horns and assisting with aircraft

equipment during the long flight.

The mission was judged a great success for both California Air Guard squadrons. The training was invaluable for the 163rd, since it created a chance to work with 146th AES personnel and to perform opportunistic airlift patient missions. The mission enabled the 163rd to develop a schematic, a Power Point lesson, and regulations to continue the training for other members who have not yet flown



Captain Bruce Trahan and TSgt Sandi McGee practice a simulated rapid decompression in-flight emergency.

aeromedical evacuation missions. As for the 146th AES, the training on the KC-135 further solidified the patient care skills and the units’ readiness for any mission. Overall, the joint training mission proved that the California Air National Guard is ready for any type of mission – stateside or abroad. 🐾



Aircraft Commander, Captain Kristy Williams, prepares for takeoff after presenting the safety and flight briefing.